

ENGLISH (HONS); Part-2; Paper-4; Unit-1 Essay; Topic -
'On the Pleasure of No Longer Being very young'; Lec-Seri-

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'On the Pleasure of No longer Being very young'

is a thought-provoking essay, written by G. K. Chesterton, who tried to analyse the advantage of old age over young generation with the help of humour paradox and frequent allusions. This old age experience tells us how ~~tradition~~ is relevant to the ever changing modern world. This essay also focuses on how the young generation is really sceptical about the advantage of old age. This essay was written in about 1930 when world was completely entrapped in economic depression as the new industrial economies have completely collapsed and modern man had learnt a lesson of being too proud of his knowledge.

People look at the advantages of the old age in a sentimental way. All old men are supposed to be happy and kind because the world seems to be growing younger and lovelier to a man advancing in years. But young people do not believe that old age is actually enjoyable but old age is the time to be openly adventurous and romantic.

old people know that they are not aware of many new things but they are happy in their "fool Paradise" as they can go on bearing new things.

Chesterton is fond of paradoxes. So, he applied it frequently and tried to make the old age appear to be "Comic Contradiction". People feel that "many things seem to growing younger" as one becomes old. Young men think that traditions, institutions, proverbs and manner are outdated and useless but old people with all their experiences realize that these traditions and customs are not outdated, they have relevance with the new age and that is the reason they survive through centuries. The writer write down:

"Traditions are true and therefore alive, indeed a tradition is not even traditional except when it is alive".

He, further, writes that 'Proverbs' are used only because they are practical and is best understood in old age. Old age is the 'second childhood' because in this age one can understand the real meaning of everything. Thus we find that 'proverbs' and traditions provide us with practical wisdom but we people, especially of younger generation, are incapable of understanding that wisdom. For example; economic —

depression was the result of the failure of modern industrial world. It could have been avoided if people remember the old lessons given by many proverbs. The phrases or maxims that fortune is fickle, that riches can not be kept, the power is fugitive, that pride goes before a fall, that insolence invites wrath of Gods are quite meaningful which only ~~elderly~~ people realise it. This has been proved by the downfall of emperors like Napoleon, Alexander and the great Romans but modern man does not take lesson from these examples. However, it is not the fault of young people, since old people have the experience of life they can better understand the real meaning of everything. It is the irony of life that:

"even as we are dying the whole world is coming to life!"

Another paradox is that "it is not the young people who realise the the new world". Young people can not comprehend because they do not have comprehension of the newness of the new things because this understanding comes only through experience. Old people have the experience, they have also the experience of old things which the new one lacks; so they can have better understand the difference

between the old and the new. The writer gives an interesting analogy. He says, we can not feel the rotation of the earth because we have never experienced a situation when the earth did not rotate. The moment earth stops rotation we will start realising how it feels when the earth rotates.

The young man at present will mock at the idea of men regularly going to church in these days. But the oldest villager would say that in his childhood even fewer people went to church. The younger generation scoffs of the idea of the existence of ghost or belief in supernatural. But modern scientist like Sir Oliver Lodge, demonstrated not only the existence of ghost but also made it possible to communicate between the living and the dead.

Thus, the essay is an attempt to demonstrate the eternal conflict between the old and the new from a realistic and practical point of view. The writer or essayist in presenting the practical advantages of getting old and for justifying his arguments took help of classical, biblical, historical and literary allusions. He pointed out many funny details of common life and used paradox and word-play to bring soft humour to the essay.